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But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Revelation 21:8

Oh, I can't get enough of the screaming and crying and fire! The screaming and crying and fire! Well let's go people, it's time for a good ol' sinner's barbecue!

Demon Tour Guide in Keenan Roberts, *Hell House* (1996-2009), p. 275

Hell is where we imagine those who are not like us. In Pastor Keenan Roberts' promenade play *Hell House*, designed as a kit to be adapted and staged by evangelical Christian communities for use in fundraising and outreach, a demonic guide encourages audiences to mock the fates of non-believers who are depicted in scenes of anguish and suffering. A woman screams in pain during a fantastical representation of abortion; a teen is goaded into suicide by a whispering demon; a funeral service is held for a gay man who has died of AIDS. Attempting to present a version of this play for Melbourne's Arts House that is as literal and non-interpretative as possible, Back to Back Theatre recruited a cast of over 50 participants from those who might be considered outsiders by the art world's leaders and decision-makers. They drew on the group of artists with whom they regularly work, who are culturally described as having intellectual disabilities, as well as volunteer performers who answered an open call for participants. Some of the volunteers had experience in amateur dramatics and community theatre, but many had never performed before. Presented over three nights, the project was described by the company as 'an anthropological study' of the faith-based community that since the early 1990s has staged versions of Roberts' *Hell House* to annual audiences of over ten thousand (Back to Back Theatre 2012). Back to Back's publicity material went on to frame the experience as not centrally about the theatrical reconstruction, but instead an occasion for a series of three public panel discussions featuring experts and popular commentators on the topics indicated by the full title: *Hell House - Provocation, Belief & Morality*.

These conversations were successful in raising questions that are rarely explicitly discussed in a public arena, such as the sources from which we derive our sense of morality, the usefulness and dangers of mass Christianity, and the judgments we form about other communities (both those underlying the scenes of condemnation in the play, as well as the Melbourne audience's own judgments about the Christian community that stages it). But the forums also reproduced conventions of what public dialogue is meant to look like – that is, a panel of experts speaking before an assembled crowd with an assumption of shared rationality and enlightenment. The conversations rarely explored the murkier and more uncomfortable spectatorial dynamics of the *Hell House* promenade itself, nor the strangeness of this suburban ensemble of actors choosing to stage this particular play – described by Back to Back's artistic director Bruce Gladwin as 'possibly one of the worst scripts I've ever seen produced' (Reid 2012). I was able to spend an extended period of time with the company as they rehearsed this project, and to talk with Gladwin about his interest in making a theatrical

form of so-called 'outsider art'. My experience of the project was not one of a simple opposition between an intolerant and an enlightened morality, but a rich and bizarre intermingling of belief, theatricality, and community, in which outsidersness recurs as the basis for moral judgment.

Come on in, people – there's so much to show you.

Departing from a commuter train after an hour's ride from Melbourne, I step out into the main town square of Geelong. There's something familiar about this place: the clock tower, the library, the bandstand in the middle of the park. Maybe there's a shared sensibility between this town, which began to prosper in the late nineteenth century, and the places I grew up in the southern US, with their wide streets and brick buildings clustered around post offices and railroad depots. Despite having the address, it takes me a few turns around the block to find Back to Back's rehearsal studio; I walk several times past a sign that says 'POLICE' before I realise that their studios are actually inside the former courthouse, now an arts centre. This, then, is the unassuming home of one of Australia's most innovative, and often controversial, theatre companies.

This is the third of four weeks of rehearsal, each week consisting of just three two-hour evening slots and a slightly longer gathering on Sundays. In the foyer, Nikki Watson, the Hell House Project Coordinator, is talking with some participants who came to the project via Diversitat, a local organisation that works to empower refugee and migrant communities. Speaking through translators, Watson is checking that the participants understand a letter of agreement that they are being asked to sign. In the main rehearsal space, Bruce Gladwin leads the motley ensemble through a repertoire of theatre games: tongue twisters, name games, grandmother's footsteps. It's a loud and joyful scene, with people frequently collapsing into hysterics. Gladwin tells the group, 'The important thing is that we are having a good time. And when you're performing, you should be having a good time too.'

In what's left of the evening, small groups break off to work on individual scenes. At this stage of the production, Gladwin's role as director appears to be largely logistical: setting blocking and checking sight-lines. Continually urging the actors to speak more loudly. Consolidating and simplifying gestures to just two or three basic elements. In the 'Funeral' scene, the participants introduced via Diversitat, along with their translators, form an unusually ethnically diverse family of mourners. They gather around the corpse of an AIDS victim who is being ridiculed by a demon for believing it is possible to be 'born gay'. 'What kind of idiot would believe that?' he sneers. Arms around each other's shoulders, the refugee mourners cover their faces and heave with fake sobs. The actors continue to run each scene a handful of times before the two hours come to an end, and then they go back to their normal lives. On my way out, someone tells me that the organist who has been playing in the funeral scene also plays the organ in her church.

Founded in 1987 and headed by Gladwin since 1999, Back to Back Theatre has toured internationally with recent productions such as *small metal objects* (2007), *Food Court* (2009), and *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* (2011); alongside this large-scale work, the Hell House project is one of several current undertakings in relation to participation and community outreach. Back to Back's ensemble is composed of actors perceived to have intellectual disabilities, but, like many companies who work with performers of varying abilities, they do not want their work to be received as being 'about' disability. Instead, the company describes their unique vantage as 'outsiders':

Driven by a core ensemble of artists with intellectual disabilities, Back to Back is uniquely placed to comment on the social, cultural, ethical and value-based structures that define the institution known as 'the majority'. Family, career, sex, politics, religion, education, academia and culture are all subject to a lateral analysis from an artistic team whose defining characteristic is separation from the spectacle of their subject matter. (Back to Back Theatre website)

In this way, the artists' marginal status is not a focus in itself but instead a perspective from which to observe the 'norm' and social processes of hierarchisation.

When I speak with Gladwin, he describes his interest in art and theatre practices that fall outside conventional delimitations of what constitutes legitimate forms of art, that challenge categories of who is and isn't capable of participating in the production or appreciation of art. He sees the US Hell House phenomenon as related to the idea of outsider art, or 'Art Brut', as it was first categorised in the 1940s by Jean Debuffet in his collection of art made by psychiatric patients, self-taught artists, and obscure obsessives. For Debuffet, these are works of art that are based not on 'imitations of art that one can see in museums, salons, and galleries', but those which 'the artist has entirely derived [...] from his [or her] own sources, from his [or her] own impulses and humors, without regard for the rules, without regard for current convention' (Peiry 2001: 11). As noted by Roger Cardinal, who coined the phrase 'outsider art' in his Anglophone study of Debuffet, there has been a persistent association of outsider art with mental illness and intellectual disability, and with autism in particular. As an example, Cardinal cites mid-century Austrian artist Arnulf Rainer, who evoked the idea of the 'lunatic artist' whose 'expressive acts take place in a notional "autistic theatre", cut off from the normal world of understanding by virtue of its hermeticism and indifference to an outside audience' (Cardinal 2009: 1459).¹ But, for Cardinal, such a connection is not necessarily a causal one. While some people on the autistic spectrum produce obsessive works of art, he writes, this does not mean that these works are symptoms of a medical disorder. Instead he identifies in this work an 'expressive intentionality', arguing that 'these works deserve respect as meaningful and intentional artistic compositions' (Cardinal 2009: 1459, 1465).

For Gladwin, the idea of outsider art usefully describes not only the absence of formal training or influence, but also the artist's obsessiveness in the creation of the work and immersion in an elaborate fantasy world. Noting that most examples of outsider art are profoundly individualistic, he is interested in the question, 'How could we collectively create something that's like a shared fantasy world?' This is a question the company has pursued in its own work – for example, the starting point for their 2011 *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* was a company member's obsessive drawings of the Hindu deity Ganesh – and by raising it in relation to Hell House, Gladwin implies that he saw something similar at work in these evangelical theatre projects. Gladwin and producer Alice Nash were exposed to Hell Houses through a secular staging in 2006 by New York theatre company Les Frères Corbusier, who, as Back to Back would go on to do, based their production on Pastor Keenan Roberts' mail-order kit.² At over 300 pages including the script for the seven basic scenes (additional scenes can

¹ With his reference to 'autistic theatre', Rainer may not have had Artaud in mind, but Debuffet did. Debuffet visited Artaud in Rodez, and in a letter written during his formative 1945 tour of Switzerland, Debuffet notes, 'I am reading *Le Théâtre et son Double* by Antonin Artaud and marvel at finding that his ideas are the same as mine.' Letter to Jean Paulhan, Lausanne, December 11, 1945 (Peiry 2011: 41).

² Roberts' script is available for faith-based organisations to order on his church's website (http://www.godestiny.org/hell_house/HH_kit.cfm), but Back to Back negotiated directly with Roberts for limited rights (for the short Melbourne season only) to produce the show. The terms of their

be purchased separately from Roberts' website), the kit attempts to provide all the information that might be needed by a community that has no experience staging theatrical productions. These include descriptions of various standard jobs (set designer, ticket coordinator, publicity coordinator), as well as those specific to the dynamics of this particular production (such as child care organiser and prayer emphasis coordinator). There are schematics and instructions for costume and set design, sample press releases, guidance on budgets and timelines, and tips on special effects, including how to make fake blood or brown-paper rocks. It's obvious that this is an undertaking involving hundreds of people committing themselves with fastidious attention to every detail.

This obsessive dedication to a common vision is captured by George Ratliff's 2001 documentary of a different Hell House production by Trinity Assembly of God Church in Cedar Hill, Texas (Ratliff 2001). Rising early before school, and staying late into the evening, volunteers who otherwise might never find themselves in a theatre are shown labouring away to construct a wholly immersive world. However, as much as these undertakings might approximate secular forms of theatrical production, it is clearly important to the participants that these projects also sit outside those conventions – that they are not 'only' theatre. As one commentator observes in Ratliff's film, 'We can only do so much with makeup and corny lines and soundtracks, but God does the difference. [...] We just show up and He does the rest.'

Another rehearsal in Geelong, in which the company is working on the 'Drunk Driving Scene'. A recurring theme across Roberts' script is a father who has failed his duties: in the funeral scene, the demon speculates that the father is watching the 'big game on TV' while the mother is conspicuously alone, and in the suicide scene, a heartbroken teen wishes her father was around to talk to. In tonight's scene, we get another failed father, who has survived a car crash that has killed his wife and daughter. 'Somebody do something. Somebody help me,' the father pleads. The demon laughs, 'I've already helped you, Daddy. To do this!'

The daughter is being played by Phoebe Baker, one of the participants in Theatre of Speed, Back to Back's weekly devising workshop of actors perceived to have various intellectual disabilities. Lying awkwardly prone, she doesn't do a convincing job of playing dead. She holds her head and her arm at unusual angles, and so her rigid pose keeps twitching. And there's also something oddly stilted, though nonetheless compelling, about Alan Watts' vocal delivery as the father. His voice is emotive but mechanical, without the signs of any underlying psychological realism. I find myself wondering if there is some impairment that he is working with – other than the impairment of this clunky script. 'Oh my God, I killed them!' he cries out, his body strangely wooden as he tries to turn, imagining his limbs to be broken.

What I find compelling about the playing of this scene is not based on my belief in the fiction; as a naturalistic portrayal of disaster, it's unsuccessful. But the 'bad' acting, the acting that tries but fails to convince, feels appropriate to the task being undertaken by the company. Is this a faithful reproduction of the evangelists' bad theatre? Or a bad reproduction of a theatre of faith? In an earlier rehearsal, Gladwin describes the Hell House production as consisting of the script, plus the element of belief. In his company's production, he acknowledges, belief is missing. 'But by knowing what is missing,' he suggests, 'we might give it some form.' He sets the company the task of trying to believe that you believe, and to make

agreement with Roberts were that they would produce the show faithfully, and Gladwin reported that the language in their programme notes around 'anthropological study' also emerged from this negotiation.

a concerted effort to avoid parody or send up. 'When we do that, we move away from belief,' he says. But, one of the actor replies, if the actors are being asked to do a double job, to act like another group of actors, what role does this imply for the audience? 'You're asking the audience members to become actors, too,' she points out.

In Roberts' script, the individual scenes of suffering on earth are followed by an encounter with Satan in the depths of Hell. Satan and his minions quote from biblical descriptions of Hell and torment, assuring their listeners that 'I guarantee you, we know the Bible better than you do.' Satan tells his audience that nothing would make him happier than for the audience to keep on as they are doing, to keep disbelieving, such that we miss the return of the Christ and spend eternity with the damned. But an angel bursts into Hell and leads the audience to Heaven, where Jesus is surrounded by still more angels. Here Roberts' script delves into choreography, describing a series of carefully orchestrated configurations of Jesus and the angels, as well as suggesting an 'appropriate' selection of music that must be carefully balanced so as not to 'turn cheesy'. As his angelic choir moves through poses around Him, Jesus tells His audience:

Hell is a real place. It is the destiny of liars, cheaters, haters, thieves, murderers, evildoers, and every person who is not living for me. In my word I've told you if you confess your sins, I will be faithful and just to forgive those sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. (Roberts 2009: 280)

The audience are given the chance to affirm their faith, and the script calls for an audience plant to join Jesus in a 'sinner's prayer', a common feature of contemporary evangelical Christian services. Roberts' version includes the pledge, 'I give you control of my mind, my words, my desires, my relationships, and my future' (281).

Complicatedly intertwined within the theatrical artifice of this constructed event is the insistence that 'Hell is a real place', a claim supported by scripture – and to disbelieve in the scripture is to condemn oneself to the Hell in which one doesn't believe. But what is the scriptural source for the vision of Hell being presented here? Although there are some allegorical allusions to 'a fiery furnace' in Matthew (13:42, 50), the image of a 'second death' leading to eternal punishment in a 'lake of fire', as well as the promise of a prolonged war between Satan and Christ on earth, derives overwhelmingly from one major source, the Book of Revelation (19:20-21). However, as one of the antilegomena or 'spoken against' texts, its very inclusion in the New Testament has been controversial from the time of its writing in the first century to the present day; Martin Luther, for example, considered excluding Revelation from his translation. Indeed, the history of both that book and the way in which it has been interpreted and wielded by religious radicals is a history of outsiders who, to reappropriate Debuffet's description, derive their world-view from their 'own sources [...] without regard for the rules, without regard for current convention.' With its convoluted and contradictory visions, recurring numerical motifs, fantastic monsters and cryptic allegories, the Book of Revelation might be regarded as one of the most influential examples of outsider art. Its initial inclusion was based on the argument that its author, who names himself as John of Patmos, is the same as John the Apostle, as only apostolic texts are included in the New Testament. While this remains the official position of the Catholic and Protestant faiths, many contemporary religious scholars conclude that both thematic and stylistic comparisons indicate that these were not the same people – nor, they argue, does this John present a particularly 'Christian' vision.

Instead, Jonathan Kirsch argues that John of Patmos was calling for an essentially Old Testament view of things – hence John gives us the image of a millennial rule by an

earthbound messiah, and also a vengeful God who replaces 'love thy neighbour' with 'do unto her as she has done to your people' (Kirsch 2006: 6, 15). And Elaine Pagels argues that, far from a 'Christian' text, John's vision can be taken as warning against the nascent emergence of a Christianity that was departing from adherence to Judaism – condemning those who 'say they are apostles, and are not' (Revelation 2:2) because they fail to follow Kosher regimens (Pagels 2012). Furthermore, both Kirsch and Pagels point out that John's vision is not unique, but merely one of 'a whole library of apocalypses, some composed long before Revelation and some long after' (Kirsch 2006: 21-22). These prophecies are characterised by the claim to reveal God's secret plan, hidden from humanity ('apocalypse' is Greek for 'uncover'), but to which the author has been granted direct and privileged knowledge. For some believers, then, John's claim to have been visited by Christ Himself makes this the most authoritative book, 'the only biblical book authored by Christ' (Kirsch 2006: 57). The problem, as Kirsch puts it, is how to distinguish between 'the prophets whom we are taught to take seriously, and the prophets whom we are inclined to regard as dangerous lunatics' (Kirsch 2006: 21).

Having become fixed in the New Testament, the fate of Revelation is to be perennially invoked by outsider movements insisting on their own divine claim that supersedes received orthodoxy. Kirsch writes, 'The front line in the battle over Revelation has always been drawn between the authority of the church and the ragtag army of unruly Bible readers who insist on coming to their own conclusions about its veiled inner meanings' (Kirsch 2006: 115). It is in just such an opposition between insiders and outsiders that the movement we now call evangelicalism has its origins. Mark Noll describes the emergence of evangelicalism out of seventeenth century changes in religious practice that have been called 'the religion of the heart', characterised by a shift away from doctrinal authority and toward intense, personal religious experience (Noll 2004: 47). In the eighteenth century, the 'Evangelical Revival' emerged in Britain, and the American colonies were swept by the 'Great Awakening', most notably spearheaded by the 'fire and brimstone' sermons of Jonathan Edwards that vividly embellished the vision of Hell described in Revelation. Though evangelicalism has spread through diverse and sometimes contradictory movements – indeed, this diversity is one of its defining characteristics – Noll summarises these movements as sharing the following properties: an emphasis on conversion, activism and dedication to God, belief in the spiritual truth of the pages of the Bible, and the central significance of Christ's sacrifice (Noll 2004: 16).

The evangelical churches that produce Hell Houses are clearly a continuation of this movement into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Both Roberts' New Destiny Christian Center and Tim Ferguson's Trinity Church, the church featured in Ratliff's documentary, are part of the Assemblies of God, founded in 1914 and now the largest Pentecostal denomination. Like other Pentecostals, the Assemblies of God are premillennialists, believing in the literal truth of Revelation and therefore that the tribulation, rapture, and judgment it prophecies are imminent. These believers also emphasise a personal religious experience, described as baptism in the Holy Spirit and evidenced by such gifts as speaking in tongues. With the stakes set by Revelation, one of the core doctrines of the Assemblies of God is 'to be an agency of God for evangelizing the world' (General Council of the Assemblies of God 2010). The urgency of this mission is felt in Ferguson's motivational words to his congregation of volunteer workers, captured in Ratliff's documentary:

It is a war, it is a battle, it is a competition. And there's a serious game where life and death is at stake - it's not just you lose and you go home. We're competing for lost souls. And we're going to win. We're in this to win. (Ratliff 2001)

If Hell is real, then for all its amateur exuberance, Hell House is serious business: it is a place where souls can be saved. And the method they choose – conveying a spiritual message

through an emotional and sensory experience – is based directly in the dense and carnal rhetoric of Revelation.

For the final scene of Hell House, Back to Back depart from Roberts' words and instructions for the first time. The script calls for 'Heaven' to be followed by a Response Room in which audience members are greeted and encouraged to join a nearby Prayer Room, where they will sit and talk individually with members of the church. Roberts gives no prescribed lines, but suggests speech for a spokesperson to make, asking people to reflect on the experience they had and to make a choice for their salvation. This is a feature that Back to Back cannot replicate except through parody, and that's not what they want to do. Like the Les Frères Corbusier production, Back to Back decide to represent the tone of the evangelical Response Room by staging a 'hoedown', with a band playing country-tinged spiritual songs and a number of greeters welcoming audience members with cakes and fruit juice.

When I join them in rehearsal, four actors are working with Gladwin to try to craft welcoming phrases that are sincere but ambiguous, in which it is not clear whether the greeter is 'acting' like a proselytiser or simply being friendly. 'We appreciate all of you taking time out of your busy schedules to visit us,' one of them offers. 'We've been praying for you, and we know that tonight your life has been touched in a powerful way.' Another recounts the scenes that the audience has just passed through: 'You have survived meeting Satan, been rescued and delivered by an angel to Jesus where you prayed the "Sinner's Prayer" with the Saviour himself.' Inviting people to avail themselves of the refreshments, she says 'Welcome and thank you for opening your hearts.' There's a blank piece of paper in front of me, so I, too, make a suggestion. 'I just want to say that it's really great to be in this room full of possibility and transformation,' I write, thinking about all the clichéd things I sometimes catch myself saying about theatre. 'I mean, anything can happen here – and it's all because you're here.'

Two weeks later, I am part of the 'real' audience at Arts House that tours Back to Back's Hell House, guided in small groups through scenes that are running on a loop. As directed by the script, each scene explicitly addresses its audience. In the 'Abortion' scene, the guide fixes his gaze on one of us – 'It's just too bad that I didn't get you... But I will.' In the 'Drunk Driving' scene, the father calls out to the audience being moved on by the guide: 'Don't leave us here!' In 'Human Sacrifice', a planted 'victim' is selected from the audience, at first protesting audience participation, but later screaming. In the entrance to Hell, an addict begs for change, a mother wails over her dead baby, a prostitute reaches out plaintively. These are clumsy and obviously staged appeals, easy to laugh off. And yet I am haunted by the pervasive sense of these performers as individuals distinct from their roles, as people who have volunteered for this strange role. Passing through Heaven and into the Hoedown, I am greeted by a smartly dressed group, each wearing a huge smile. One begins to speak, and I find myself being welcomed by my own words.

Several scholarly analyses have drawn a connection between contemporary Hell Houses and the emergence of radical evangelism during the eighteenth century. In his rhetorical analysis, Brian Jackson suggests that Hell Houses are the modern-day equivalent of the *argumentum ad baculum*, or persuasion via fear (literally 'argument to the club'), that characterised the North American Great Awakening. Jackson's comparison focuses on what he calls the 'terror revivalism' of Jonathan Edwards, which he argues shares with Hell Houses two distinguishing characteristics: a belief in the certainty of hell, and an appeal that works through crafted manipulation of psychosomatic sensation, 'whose full effect requires fear in the heart and trembling in the limbs' (Jackson 2007: 45, 55). Similarly, Ann Pellegrini describes

Hell Houses as functioning not through reasoned argument, but an affective experience that is closer to what Raymond Williams called a 'structure of feeling': 'The participant is invested (or reinvested) in a deeper structure of religious feeling that can tie together disparate, even contradictory, experiences, bodily sensations, feelings, and thoughts' (Pellegrini 2007: 918).

In this way, the content of the belief, with which one may or may not disagree, is less interesting to Pellegrini than the way that theatricality functions in the production of belief. She draws a comparison between Hell Houses and the innovations of George Whitefield, the English revivalist who studied but later repudiated acting, and whose North American tour inspired Edwards and others. After his conversion, 'Whitefield would do battle with theater as if it were a "*competing church*," but he would do so using his rival's tools' (Pellegrini 2007: 913, Stout 1991: 8). But Pellegrini notes the way in which theatre's mimetic capacities may have uncontrollable consequences, such that 'gaps may re-emerge elsewhere' (Pellegrini 2007: 918). She argues that Roberts must sense this when, for example, he specifies in his 'Gay Marriage' add-on pack that the gay couple be played not by two men, but by a married heterosexual couple; similarly, Ratliff's documentary shows Ferguson quickly dismissing suggestions for scenes that elaborate on same-sex relationships. Pellegrini attributes this reluctance to an implicit understanding of the unstable volatility of sexual representations that may elicit real, if confused, desire (Pellegrini 2007: 922).

Perhaps as one way to direct and contain the imaginative excesses that Pellegrini describes, Hell House productions typically end with an open-ended opportunity to talk with church elders about issues that have been provoked. In Back to Back's production, the post-performance forums were conceived as a secular version of this conversation with elders, and, as such, they directly juxtaposed these two different kinds of experience: the affective theatricality of the Hell House and the reasoned argument of the post-show forums. Many panellists, particularly those affiliated with Christian denominations, took sharp disagreement with the moral universe presented in Hell House. Theologian Benjamin Myers found its 'erotic' fascination with death to be 'insulting'; sociologist Andrew Singleton criticised its 'religion of fear'; Catholic priest John Dupuche called it 'a bizarre distortion of Christianity', likening it to 'a funhouse mirror'; and theologian Peter Sherlock lamented the absence of a sense of social justice that he finds inherent in Jesus' teaching.

For these commentators in the forums, this re-enactment of a western American Hell House for an audience in Melbourne provided an opportunity to critique the moral universe of this faraway group – and also, at the forums' more interesting moments, to reflect on the judgments and assumptions at work in contexts that were closer to this audience's home. But I think the moral claim of this project is more complex than this; it is not just a transparent document of another theatrical event, but is also an event in its own right. And in this event, a complicated set of community identifications and disidentifications are deployed: Back to Back's assembled community of outsiders plays at being another community of outsiders, who themselves revel in the portrayal of those from whom they ordinarily distance themselves – and all of this is done for the benefit of another community, that of the urbane theatre-goer, who assemble afterwards in a mode, the public forum, that it so often assumes when it wants to represent itself to itself.

In this doubling and distancing, Back to Back's *Hell House* calls to mind another eighteenth century moral philosophy – but one decidedly more secular – that was put forward in Adam Smith's 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith 1976). In his attempt to identify a basis for moral judgment that does not derive from a divine arbiter, Smith located it in our capacity for sympathy, understood not as an emotional response itself but as the capacity for simultaneous distance and imagination that gives rise to such sentiments (Campbell 1971: 94-

96). Smith puts forward the idea of an ‘impartial spectator’, a ‘man within the breast’ whom we imaginatively project into a situation to see whether one’s conduct is to be praised or condemned (Smith 1976: 130-131). David Marshall points out that this is a profoundly theatrical moral philosophy, one that asks us to become not just impartial but also *spectators* – at the same time implicated and distant, not only in relation to others, but also to ourselves:

Smith seems to separate the self from the one self it could reasonably claim to know: itself. In order to sympathize with ourselves, we must imagine ourselves as an other who looks upon us as an other and tries to imagine us. (Marshall 1984: 599)

Sympathy may be a form of connection and fellow-feeling, but it is one predicated upon an experience of separation and distance, the feeling of an outsider within us. Drawing on Marshall’s reading of Smith, Tracy Davis has extended this theatrical *dédoublement* as a model for moral engagement with civil society at large: ‘Through being spectators to the *theatrum mundi* of civil society, engaged but not absorbed watchers, we bring our whole experience to bear on what is seen without insisting on sameness as the criterion of worth.’ She continues, ‘It is not solely in intersubjectivity that civil society is maintained, but in what separates us’ (Davis 2003: 154). This shared separation, or collective outsidership, is a current that runs through the entirety of Back to Back’s Hell House. This is different from the moral universe given form in the evangelical Hell House, in which those who are ‘not like us’ are a problem; they must be assimilated through conversion, or else cast out amongst the damned. It might be argued that the public forum, too, aspires toward communal consensus and persuasion through reasoned argument. But in between the two, Back to Back’s Hell House is something more fractured and dissensual. This is ‘outsider theatre’, not because it is made by so-called outsiders, but because, as we go deeper inside it, it makes outsiders of us all.

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